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SUBJECT: CHADIAN REBELS: UFR'S TOLLIMI ADDRESSES EU INITIATIVE,
TROOP MOVEMENT TO NORTH DARFUR

REF: A) KHARTOUM 1199

1. (SBU) Summary: In an October 25 meeting with poloff, Secretary General of Chadian rebel group Union des Forces de la Resistance (UFR) Abakar Tollimi expressed concern about the lack of progress in the EU-led initiative to facilitate political discussions between UFR and the Government of Chad (GOC), noting the roadmap document produced by UFR to initiate dialogue has received little response. He further lamented that the recently unveiled U.S. Sudan Policy made scant mention of Chad, and requested the USG to clarify its position towards the UFR and the roadmap. Tollimi confirmed that the entire Chadian rebel force has now moved into the area near Ain Siro in North Darfur, and has no plans to mobilize anytime soon. UN observers believe that moving away from the border region enables the Chadian rebels to avoid GOC aerial bombing and prevent defections, while allowing them to regroup, train and conserve their strength for future operations. Experts also believe that the UFR's presence in North Darfur will serve as a buffer force for potential incursions into Sudan by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), although Tollimi denied this. End Summary.

CHADIAN REBELS IN NORTH DARFUR

2. (SBU) On October 25, poloff met with UFR Secretary General Abakar Tollimi. Tollimi confirmed that the entire Chadian rebel force had moved to the area of Ain Siro, North Darfur. He claimed the force was 10,000 strong, a figure often cited by rebel leadership. (Note: UNAMID's Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC) estimates that following the failed attack of May 2009, Chadian rebel groups have been downsized to almost half of their original strength due to losses during the fighting as well as defections. Current troop strength is estimated at between 1,500-2,000 fighters. End note.) Tollimi claimed that Chadians rebel presence in the area had met no resistance from local SLA commanders, and that the Chadians had no immediate plans to mobilize. "They are not going anywhere," he remarked.

3. (SBU) UN sources believe that Chadian rebels' move into North Darfur may have been motivated by the need for sanctuary. Moving away from the border region and known locations has enabled the Chadian rebels to avoid Chadian Armed Forces (ANT) aerial bombing, and has prevented defections, while allowing them to regroup, train and conserve their strength for future operations. They have also noted that the positioning of Chadian rebels in North Darfur has countered JEM's freedom of movement, as this area is the favorite line of incursion for JEM military operations into Sudan. (Note: Some observers speculate that the GOS may have traded this positioning of the Chadian rebels in exchange for their future support. End note.) For his part, Tollimi stated that the Chadian rebels reserve the right of self-defense against potential JEM incursions, but claimed that Chadian rebel forces would not

intervene should JEM attack the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF).

SLOW PROGRESS ON EU INITIATIVE

14. (SBU) Tollimi noted that following the EU-led discussions in Geneva between UFR and representatives from the EU, Swiss Confederation, Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD) and AF/C, UFR has since developed a codified position in the form of a roadmap to initiate dialogue with the GOC. However he lamented that UFR has received no response from either the EU or other observer countries, including the U.S. He also expressed concern that the recently-unveiled USG Sudan Policy made scant mention of Chad. To this end, he requested a meeting with CDA Whitehead on behalf of UFR President Erdimi to clarify the USG position towards UFR and the roadmap. (Note: With AF/C approval, the CDA is scheduled to meet the Chadian rebel leadership this week, and has solicited talking points. End note.)

15. (SBU) Tollimi continued that despite the lack of progress, the UFR was committed to the roadmap and would be holding a party conference before the end of the month. Following the implementation of the roadmap, this conference would pave the way for the UFR to become a political party and integrate itself into the political process, per the August 13, 2007 political accord, he said. With regard to the recent steps taken towards normalization of relations between Chad and Sudan, Tollimi noted that while such developments constituted a positive step, the UFR ought to be included in normalization talks.

16. (SBU) Comment: It remains to be seen how the latest rapprochement

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between Sudan and Chad will impact both the UFR and JEM. While the Chadian rebels remain totally reliant on GOS support, JEM has absorbed a number of indigenous Darfuri commanders through the April 2009 defection of Suleiman Jamous to JEM from SLA/Unity, and maintains at least some presence in Darfur; JEM is said to be physically in control of Jebel Moon in West Darfur, and is widely believed to be present in the far reaches of Dar Zaghawa, including in Bamina, Furawiya, Muzbat and Bahai. End comment.

WHITEHEAD